

THE ANDAMAN ISLANDERS

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622 groups of families. There is some spontaneous recognition of individuals as 'headmen' as a result of some generally accepted superiority of physique or discernment, but the concept goes no further than the giving of some weight to their views within the group.

13 MARRIAGE

● 545 The Onges are monogamous, like all peoples who have never progressed
837 beyond the stage of hunting and gathering, and adultery is virtually un-
585 known. Marriage consists merely of the man taking possession of the
woman in the presence of the rest of the group, taking her by the hand
to a new bed built for the occasion and allotted a place within the circle.
The 'marriage' takes place in the late evening and is followed by frenzied
dancing all night long by the light of the resin torches. The total absence
[174] of any form of ritual leads one to suppose isolation from a very early date
indeed, but this cannot be more than conjecture.

14 BURIAL

172 The custom of burying the dead in caves still occupied by the living
174 apparently existed in the Palaeolithic era. The practice has continued to
764 the present time in the Andamans, where the dead are still buried under
the family bed in the communal hut. It is known from Palaeolithic burials
that even in that era objects were sometimes buried with the dead, and it
is thus possible that the culture of the Andamans dates back to very early
times.

15 EXHUMATION AND SECOND BURIAL

172 The custom of exhuming the bones of the dead and re-interring them
765 after coloration (in this case with ochre) dates from the Palaeolithic era.

16 BONE NECKLACES

301 The custom of wearing necklaces of carpals, tarsals, phalanges and frag-
ments of rib, is of extreme antiquity, and apart from the Andamans, has
virtually disappeared.

17 RELIGION

172 There is evidence that even in Palaeolithic times there existed a belief in
775 the survival of the spirit after death, and a fear of its return (hence the
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